

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01 /045 R

DRAFTED BY EA/TB - VLTOMSETH:MFG

APPROVED BY EA/TB - GBROBERTS

EA/P - MSMITH

EA/VN - JFINNEY

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P R 232234Z JAN 75

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TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

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INFO CINCPAC

S E C R E T STATE 016499

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, TH, PFOR

SUBJECT: US-RTG DISCUSSIONS ON FORCE LEVELS

REF: BANGKOK 1223

1. THE WASHINGTON POST JANUARY 23 CARRIED THE FOLLOWING
AS PART OF AN AP ITEM FILED FROM PHNOM PENH:
QUOTE: IN BANGKOK, HIGH-LEVEL THAI OFFICIALS SAID WEDNESDAY
THAT THE SITUATION IN THE REST OF INDOCHINA WAS "RATHER
CRITICAL" AND THAT THIS WOULD HAVE A DIRECT EFFECT ON THE
SCHEDULE OF FURTHER WITHDRAWALS OF U.S. FORCES FROM
THAILAND.

FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN ISARANGKUN NA AYUTHAYA MET WITH
U.S. AMBASSADOR WILLIAM R. KINTNER IN A SESSION THAT HAD
BEEN BILLED AS A DISCUSSION OF THE NEXT WITHDRAWAL PHASE.
IN A NEWS CONFERENCE LATER HE SAID, "THE SITUATION IN INDO-
CHINA IS INTENSIFYING AND WE JUST CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT
THAT. IT IS RATHER CRITICAL."

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STILL LATER, GEN. KRIANGSAK CHAMANAND, THE CHIEF OF STAFF, SAID THAT A REVIEW HAD TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE WITHDRAWALS COULD BE CONSIDERED, AND "THE NEXT WITHDRAWALS OF AMERICAN TROOPS WILL DEPEND ON THE SITUATION."

INFORMED U.S. SOURCES HAVE SAID THAT THE NEXT WITHDRAWAL PHASE FOR THE APPROXIMATELY 350 WARPLANES AND 25,000 MEN IN THE COUNTRY WAS PROJECTED TO START SOMETIME AROUND APRIL, BUT COULD BE DELAYED IF HEAVY FIGHTING CONTINUED IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. END QUOTE.

2. THERE WERE NO QUESTIONS ON THIS SUBJECT AT THE DEPARTMENT'S NOON PRESS BRIEFING JANUARY 23. WE ARE PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS WHICH MIGHT ARISE AS FOLLOWS:

QUESTION: COULD YOU COMMENT ON A REPORT FROM BANGKOK THAT US AND THAI OFFICIALS WILL REVIEW THE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA BEFORE FURTHER WITHDRAWAL OF US FORCES IN THAILAND CAN TAKE PLACE?

ANSWER: THE REPORT IS ESSENTIALLY ACCURATE. US AND THAI OFFICIALS MET JANUARY 22 IN BANGKOK TO DISCUSS FORCE REDUCTIONS CARRIED OUT TO DATE AND TO REVIEW THE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA. BOTH GOVERNMENTS HAVE ALWAYS TAKEN THE POSITION THAT REDEPLOYMENTS MUST BE RELATED TO DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA.

QUESTION: HOW MANY US FORCES ARE PRESENTLY IN THAILAND?

ANSWER: MUTUALLY AGREED UPON REDUCTIONS THROUGH DECEMBER 31 BROUGHT OUR AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL LEVEL DOWN TO APPROXIMATELY 27,000. ACTUAL IN-COUNTRY STRENGTHS VARY SOMEWHAT FROM DAY TO DAY.

3. WE UNDERSTAND THE DIFFICULTY OF THE SITUATION YOU CONFRONTED IN DEALING WITH CHARUNPHAN'S INSISTENCE THAT WE RESUME CONSULTATIONS. WHILE IT DID NOT COME OFF EXACTLY AS WE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED, CHARUNPHAN'S AND PARTICULARLY KRIANGSAK'S STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS PROBABLY WILL CONVEY THE APPROPRIATE SIGNAL TO THE NORTH VIET-
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NAMESE. WE APPRECIATE AND COMMEND YOUR EFFORTS IN ACHIEVING THIS HAPPY ENDING. INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, FORCE & TROOP LEVELS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: RowellE0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE016499
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: VLTOMSETH:MFG
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750026-0422
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750125/aaaaawbe.tel
Line Count: 109
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BANGKOK 1223
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: RowellE0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUL 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <13 NOV 2003 by RowellE0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US-RTG DISCUSSIONS ON FORCE LEVELS
TAGS: MARR, PFOR, TH
To: BANGKOK PHNOM PENH
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006